

Minnesota Veterans' Home Complex, Storage Building
5101 Minnehaha Avenue South
Minneapolis
Hennepin County
Minnesota

HABS No. MN-74-J

HABS
MINN,
27-MINAP,
19-J-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MINNESOTA VETERANS' HOME COMPLEX,
STORAGE BUILDING

74-J
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Location: 5101 Minnehaha Avenue South, Minneapolis,
Hennepin County, Minnesota.

USGS St. Paul West Quadrangle, Universal
Transverse Mercator Coordinates: Zone 15;
483960:4973380; 484140:4972680; 483640:4973140

Present Owner: State of Minnesota
Department of Veterans' Affairs
St. Paul, Minnesota

Present Occupant: Minnesota Veterans' Home

Present Use: Storage of Grounds Maintenance Equipment

Significance: The Storage Building, once called the Carpenter's Shop, is one of a collection of buildings which helped define the Minnesota Soldiers' Home as self-sustaining. This building, built in 1921, along with the bakery, shoe repair shop, barber shop, tailor, laundry and heating plant contributed to the well-being of the soldiers living at the Home. It stands in original condition.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of Erection: 1921 (Source: Minnesota Soldiers' Home Annual Report 1922-23, and Sanborn Map, 1930).
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and Subsequent Owners: State of Minnesota
4. Builder, Contractor, Suppliers: Unknown
5. Original Plans and Construction: Not Available
6. Alterations and Additions: Minor alterations to accommodate the Commissary built immediately behind in 1950. The back exit was filled in.

8. Historical Context:

In October, 1847, when Mr. Franklin Steele, a major landowner of the East Bank of the Mississippi river, decided to build a dam across the Mississippi River at St. Anthony, he hired Ard Godfrey, a recent immigrant from Maine, to superintend the work. This was the first dam built across the falls at St. Anthony and was the beginning of a long career in the milling industry for Mr. Godfrey.

Although the West Bank of the river was occupied only by the military at Fort Snelling, Ard Godfrey had one of the soldiers put a parcel of the land there in his name. This land was subsequently bought by Mr. Godfrey. It forms a point bounded by the confluence of the Mississippi River and Brown's Creek (as Minnehaha was then called). The natural falls on the creek were dammed by Mr. Godfrey and a mill was erected for grinding grain in 1853. He also built his home north of the creek in 1853.

The City of Minneapolis bought the land for \$1,000.00 an acre from Mr. Godfrey in 1870, which was planned to become part of the new Minneapolis Park System.

In 1886 a plea was made to Governor McGill to consider legislation to appropriate funds and land for a soldiers' home. It had been 20 years since the Civil War, and many aging veterans were living in county poor houses. It is believed that 30,000 soldiers of the "Great Rebellion" lived in Minnesota in 1886. Godfrey's Point, as the land had come to be known, was offered by the City of Minneapolis for the home. It was accepted by the Soldiers' Home Committee on July 12, 1887, and an appropriation for the erection of buildings became available in the summer of 1888. In the meantime, soldiers were housed in nearby structures from November 21, 1887 until a headquarters, hospital, dining hall, heating and laundry plant and cottages could be built. Warren Barnes Ounnell was selected architect for the project from a competition held, and H. Cleveland was selected as landscape architect.

Original legislation had appropriated \$100,000.00 for building at the Soldiers' Home. A cottage plan was adopted because it made expansion easier. Professor Cleveland laid out a series of roads, the main one forming a great loop, around which the cottages would be built. In 1888 two cottages and one section of the heating plant were built. In 1890 the central portion and one wing of the hospital was completed, along with the addition to the heating plant, used for a laundry. Electricity was available to the cottages in this year as well.

In 1891 \$105,000.00 was made available to the Soldiers' Home and another cottage and a domestic building were added. Each building conformed to a strict architectural style: The basement stories and lintels and pediments are of Lake Superior sandstone, the bricks are St. Louis pressed. The interior woodwork is oak and the floors are maple. All windows are of single pane double hung. The out buildings added to the complex during the first 30 years conformed to these architectural standards. The storage building of this report, known as the Carpenter's Shop when original, conformed in color only. Its exterior stucco finish was, of course, aggregate tinted sandstone color.

This is the second carpenter's shop to be on this site. The first is shown as wood on the 1912 Sanborn Map, is 10' high, and is adjacent to a now demolished blacksmith's shop. The Storage Building today stands in original condition with the exception of a coat of cream-colored paint over the original reddish stucco finish. The back exit has been filled in, due to the positioning of the 1950 Commissary Building, less than two feet away.

The Minnesota Veterans' Home Complex is not as populated as it was at the turn of the Century. Many modern buildings have been added to the grounds, changing the intended character of the "cottage cluster" idea and similar materials. Cleveland's landscape layout continues to lead one on a charming loop around the site, at one point to the edge of the Mississippi Bluffs, overlooking the still beautiful sight of the flowing river. Ard Godfrey's mill ruins remain along the banks of the Minnehaha Creek, all serving to recall a grand past at Godfrey's Point.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: The Storage Building is a one-and-a-half story building of stucco over a wood frame. It stands in original condition. The front of the building faces the back of the Laundry Building No. 13. The original color of the building was of sandstone-tinted stucco, thus blending into the character of the entire site.
2. Condition of the Fabric: The Storage Building is in excellent condition. The stucco finish shows no signs of cracking due to settling or weather.

8. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: The Storage Building footprint measures 16' x 16'. The first floor ceiling is 12' high. Access to the attic space is through an opening in the ceiling, with no visible stair or ladder.
2. Foundation: The foundation is concrete, with a crawl space below the first floor. Stucco runs down to grade, covering the foundation.
3. Walls:
 - a. Northeast Elevation: (Front) The northeast facade has one-and-a-half stories with the attic space under a gable roof shape. The facade is asymmetrical, with the left gable end projecting an additional six feet, at a slightly lower slope. There is a set of four doors, each with four square divided panes of glass. The doors are centered below the gable peak, as is an attic opening of solid wood. A single door opens into the left section at grade.
 - b. Northwest Elevation: This side faces the heating plant. It is one story high. It has two windows evenly spaced of six over six lights.
 - c. Southwest Elevation: (Back) The southwest facade has its original coat of unpainted stucco. It has one window in the left third of six over six lights. A door was once centered under the peak of the gable roof. It has now been filled in.
 - d. Southeast Elevation: This side is identical to its opposite side. It looks out onto a sloping field which once was the location of Building No. 5.
4. Structural System, Framing: The entire building is frame, 2 x 4 stud wall construction. Over this is metal lathe and sandstone tinted course stucco. The first and second floors are of wood.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and Doors: Door frames and doors are of wood. Each door has a square window divided into fourths.
 - b. Windows: All windows are of wood and are 6/6 double hung.

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- c. Roof: The gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles. At the center of the ridge is a skylight running down each slope for four feet. At the center of this is a cap vent.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans: The plan of the first floor is divided into two rooms. One room runs along the southeast wall and is six feet deep. The remaining space constitutes the other room. The attic space is not used as a room.
2. Flooring: The floor is of hardwood.
3. Walls: The walls are of gypsym board over stud walls. The ceiling is of wood.
4. Doors: There is one interior door of wood.
5. Mechanical Equipment: The building is heated by steam from the adjacent power plant.
6. Equipment: There is no equipment remaining from its original use as a carpenter's shop.

D. Site:

1. General Setting and Orientation: The Storage Building was intended to be a visual and physical part of the out-buildings cluster at this end of the site. It does not conform strictly to the style of the main grounds. It did once closely resemble the old heating plant/laundry building which was demolished in 1937, in silhouette. It was tinted sandstone color to blend in with the general character of the site. It was once part of a cluster of buildings which included Buildings No. 1, 2, 4, 5, the paint shop, the garages, the commissary, powerhouse, and diningroom. Buildings No. 3 and 5 have been demolished, and the grounds are no longer maintained between the Storage Building and the paint shop and garages. The main approach is along the road which runs between Building No. 1 and the Diningroom.
2. Other Buildings on the Site:
 - a. Building No. 1, Hobby Shop (Domiciliary)
 - b. Building No. 2, Pool Room (Domiciliary)
 - c. Building No. 4, (Domiciliary)

- d. Building No. 6, (Domiciliary)
- e. Building No. 7, Dining Room
- f. Building No. 9, (Domiciliary)
- g. Building No. 10, Administration
- h. Building No. 12, Commissary
- i. Building No. 13, Laundry
- j. Building No. 14, Power House
- k. Building No. 15, Chapel/Auditorium
- l. Building No. 16, Infirmary/Clinic
- m. Building No. 17, Residence
- n. Garages
- o. Paint Shop

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Panoramic Views: A panoramic view of the site shows the juxtaposition of buildings after 1950. Buildings No. 3 and 5 are included on this, and the modern residence and clinic are not included. The site looks much more homogenous in character. The view was in an Annual Report of the MVH, 1944.
- B. Photographs: Several photos of the powerplant showed edges of the Laundry and the Carpenter's Shop. One photo of the powerplant prior to 1937 confirms the character of the old laundry and matches it to the Carpenter's Shop. (MHS)
- C. Maps: Sandborn maps from 1892, 1912 and 1930 showed the evolution of the site. Maps were from the Minnesota Historical Society Map Library.
- D. Building Permits, Historical Articles: Building permits were not issued for the site, as it was state owned. Histories of the State of Minnesota and the City of Minneapolis helped track ownership and use, and the Annual Reports of the Minnesota Soldiers' Home, beginning in 1888 documented building and funding activity.

E. Bibliography:

1. Books:

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3. Miscellaneous:

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Collection and Insurance Map Collection.

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University of Minnesota
April, 1988

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was prepared as a class project for Architecture 5143, Historical Building Research and Documentation, a class offered in the School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota. The class project was prepared under the direction of Professor Foster W. Dunwiddie in cooperation with the State Historic Preservation Office of the Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul, Minnesota. Historical data was compiled by Jane Eickelberg, University of Minnesota, April, 1988.